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INDO-CHINA STRIFE REVEALS SCOPE OF UNREST IN COLONIAL ASIA

FRENCH military superiority in the current Indo-Chinese conflict became more evident on December 29 when troops dispatched from Hanoi established contact with two French garrisons surrounded by soldiers of the Viet Nam Republic. Meanwhile, the clandestine Viet Nam radio was reported to be sounding out French reaction to a possible renewal of negotiations. Recognized by France last March 6 as a "free state" within the Indo-Chinese Federation and French Union, the Viet Nam Republic hopes to win further concessions.

The Viet Nam attack on French troops, which was launched in Hanoi on December 19 after many previous "incidents," is the result of a complex political and psychological situation. The actual facts are difficult to establish because of the confusion of accusations and countercharges hurled at each other by the contestants. According to some reports the all-out Annamite offensive was geared to French political developments. Viet Nam leaders may have hoped that the formation of a Socialist cabinet by Léon Blum in Paris on December 16 would be followed by proclamation of a French policy more favorable to Annamite aspirations. But no such change occurred, and Viet Nam apparently decided upon renewal of full-scale warfare—at a moment when France is ruled by a weak interim cabinet—in the hope that this action would further divide French opinion, thereby strengthening the Annamite position.

DISPUTE OVER COCHIN-CHINA. The chief issue between Viet Nam and France is French policy in Cochin-China, a land which Viet Nam regards as ethnically, culturally and economically part of the Annamite world. The French do not deny that there are close ties between the peoples of Viet Nam and Cochin-China, but contend that the future

of the latter area must be determined by the Cochin-Chinese. The French have agreed to ascertain this "will of the people" by referendum, but declare that a fair vote can not be held until order and stability have been restored. Meanwhile, however, a provisional republic of Cochin-China was proclaimed on June 1 with a nine-member cabinet responsible to Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, the French High Commissioner (although all nine members of this cabinet were Annamite, seven of them were French citizens). Viet Nam leaders consider this action an attempt to influence the ultimate vote by prejudging the situation, while the French maintain that they are acting under pressure of Cochin-China's desire for self-government.

Many Cochin-Chinese do not want union with Viet Nam, for they live in an easier environment, are somewhat better off economically, and fear that their condition would suffer from union with their poorer neighbors to the north. At the same time, however, Cochin-China has many nationalists who are ardent advocates of union with Viet Nam. The respective strength of the separatist and unionist factions is impossible to ascertain without a plebiscite. According to a report of December 28, unionist newspaper circulation outnumbers that of the separatist press about twenty to one, but this is an indication of unionist propaganda activity and, while significant, does not necessarily reflect the proportionate strength of the two groups. Although the French encourage the separatist point of view, it is inaccurate to call the separatist movement a purely French creation.

UNDERLYING TENSIONS. More serious than the immediate conflict over Cochin-China are the underlying causes of the present hostilities. They are especially worth recalling because they are dupli-

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cated in Indonesia, and events in Indo-China illustrate the dangers still faced by the Dutch despite their November 15 settlement with the Indonesians. In both areas a native nationalist movement has long been agitating for freedom; in both, especially in Indonesia, hatred for the white man was intensified by a highly efficient Japanese propaganda campaign during the war; in both territories the fortunes of war enabled the inhabitants to seize the weapons needed for rebellion; and in both countries blood has been spilled, and passions have been aroused during prolonged and embittered fighting. The resulting psychological situation constitutes a perpetual danger to peaceful relations, for as long as native and foreign armed forces are present in the same country, sporadic outbreaks of violence seem almost inevitable. Under such conditions, moderate nationalists find it difficult to retain leadership in the face of agitation by extremists.

Faced by the double danger of inflation at home and a further blow abroad at France's position as an imperial power, the French are resorting to the policy of the iron hand in the velvet glove. Admiral d'Argenlieu and General Leclerc have returned to Indo-China to suppress the rebellion, but the Socialist Minister of France Overseas, Marius Moutet, has also been dispatched to survey the situation for the Blum government. The French know that the loss of Indo-China, after the forced departure of France from Syria and Lebanon, might have serious repercussions in North Africa where Arab discontent with French rule is widespread. With about 82,000 troops already in Indo-China and more on the way, France should be able to overcome the more poorly armed and trained soldiers and guerrillas of the Republic of Viet Nam. What the victory

will be worth will depend both on the generosity of the ultimate peace settlement and the skill with which French representatives in the future deal with an extremely delicate situation.

FRENCH COMMUNIST POLICY. The significance of rumors about a break between French Communists and other parties over the Indo-Chinese situation appears to have been greatly exaggerated. The National Assembly, it should be noted, was unanimous in adopting on December 24 an unreduced military budget for the first quarter of 1947. In striving for political rule over the world's second largest colonial empire, the French Communists are realistic enough to be cautious on the colonial issue. Moreover, they are in the fortunate position of having no difficulty with Moscow on this point. The Moscow press and radio have called for Indonesian independence, and Soviet delegations have brought the Indonesian situation before the United Nations, but the Russians have maintained a discreet silence about Indo-China. In their desire for the strongest possible bastion in Western Europe, they perhaps do not want to do anything that might weaken the Communists in France. Somewhat more subtle but nonetheless plausible is another possible Soviet motive. If the French were driven out of Indo-China, the resulting political vacuum would eventually be filled by the influence of China or of Britain and the United States. It is therefore advantageous to Moscow that the French should maintain their position. In Indonesia, where the Dutch are already considered by the Russians to be within the Anglo-American sphere, the Soviet Union has nothing to lose by propaganda for colonial independence.

VERNON MCKAY

HINDUS AND MOSLEMS STILL AT ODDS ON STRUCTURE OF NEW STATE

India's attempt to frame a constitution through the mechanism of the Constituent Assembly, which opened in New Delhi on December 9 and recessed on December 23, has thus far made little headway. While representatives of the Hindu-dominated Congress party are in attendance those from the Moslem League are not. For Moslem-Hindu differences about the function of the assembly and the character of the future Indian state have not been composed despite last-minute efforts of the Attlee government in London to bring both sides together before the constitution-making process started. There are some indications, however, that the Congress party may adopt a more moderate attitude toward the policy formulated by the Moslem League, thus enabling the latter to join the assembly when it reconvenes on January 20.

DISAGREEMENT OVER METHODS. The British government took the occasion of the Lon-

don conference of December 3-6 to reiterate its stand on the program laid down last May 16 for the new Indian government. That plan called for the present assembly and also provided for a future federal régime in India. Below the federal framework three provincial groups were to be formed. The constituent assembly itself was to divide into three sections to write constitutions for these provincial blocs and for the provinces concerned. The May 16 proposals further provided that, following the first general election under the new federal constitution, provinces might withdraw from the regional groups originally established. These groupings were suggested as a compromise to the demands of Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Moslem League for Pakistan or separate Indian states, which the British Cabinet Mission that visited India early last spring otherwise decisively rejected.

Neither Congress nor the League has ever given

unqualified approval to the May 16 proposals. Congress, however, agreed to proceed on the basis of these proposals and formed an interim government on September 2, which Moslem League members after some unwillingness to participate joined on October 5. Congress alone proved willing to take the next step and enter the constituent assembly, although on the understanding that provinces which did not wish to remain in the sectional groupings, suggested by Britain as part of the constitution-making machinery, could withdraw from the outset. The League, on the other hand, has maintained that the original plan meant what the British have now reaffirmed it to mean. The Attlee government stated on December 6 that, "should a Constitution come to be framed by a Constituent Assembly in which a large section of the Indian population had not been represented, His Majesty's Government could not, of course, contemplate—as the Congress had stated they would not contemplate—forcing such a Constitution upon any unwilling parts of the country."

HAS BRITAIN BACK-TRACKED? Because the results of the London talks proved so meager, many observers have wondered just why they were held at all. Jawaharlal Nehru, Vice President of the interim government and, next to Gandhi, chief leader of the Congress party, took part in the conversations, although many elements in the Congress opposed his going to London. Jinnah's position and that of the Moslem League have been improved somewhat as a consequence of the London conference. Many Congress adherents believe that the London meetings were intended mainly to demonstrate support for the League, which had suffered some setback in popularity because of the riots in India since last August.

Hindu nationalists, also contend that Britain has back-tracked on its original intention to give up full power in India in the near future. They claim there is great danger that a "new imperialism" is emerging; that Britain, like France, is attempting to retain effective control over former colonies by instituting weak governments which must rely on outside support. Congress members point out that the energetic way in which the new all-Indian Ministry has tackled government problems alarmed British officials on the spot in New Delhi. It is an open secret that Nehru and Congress leaders have threatened to resign from the interim administration which now operates under the Viceroy unless the

latter acts in spirit and in practice only as a constitutional head of the state.

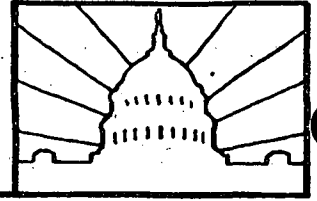
It is true that the British government is confronted with the danger of further alienating Moslem residents of the Arab world if it takes a firmer stand against Jinnah and his party in India. It is hardly logical to conclude that London has made an about-face on India, unless it is assumed that Britain's broader interests along its Mediterranean "life-line" and throughout the Middle East are now in greater danger than a year ago. Some observers, however, argue that Britain is now stronger than at the end of the war, largely as a result of progress in restoring its foreign trade position, and may therefore be less willing to yield further on its Indian proposals. But it is still agreed by Labor leaders that, when Britain withdraws from India, the new state may cut all political ties with London if it wishes. The Cabinet mission made that clear by emphasizing the Labor government's aim to free India whether or not it chooses to remain within the Commonwealth.

TEST FOR INDIANS. Even if the Congress party takes a more moderate attitude toward the League, which would permit Jinnah and his followers to join the assembly, many deep-seated differences would still remain. Should Jinnah use the assembly to further his plans for Pakistan from the inside, many observers fear that full-scale civil war would result before the issue of one country versus a divided nation could be settled. The fierceness of the recent riots, however, has sobered both sides about the use of force. Neither group is prepared at present for military operations, and so far no communal division has occurred within the ranks of the regular army. Plans for Indianization of the army are underway, but it is still commanded, in part, by British officers.

Since the federal régime envisaged in the May 16 proposals is to be a weak government, the present constitutional problem is but the initial test for India. Only defense, communications and foreign affairs are to be dealt with by the federal régime. Once the nation is fully sovereign, presumably Indians will set about immediately to grant more authority to the central government. Then the major issues facing the country can be tackled with vigor. India's greatest tasks lie in the years ahead when it must attempt to rid the country of famine, bring about land reforms, and advance industrialization.

GRANT S. MCCLELLAN

Washington News Letter



GREAT POWERS VIE FOR OIL CONCESSIONS IN IRAN

The calm that settled on Iran when the central government on December 13 reestablished its authority over Azerbaijan may prove only a calm before the storm, for a struggle between the United States and Russia for economic privilege is under way in that Middle Eastern nation. Both countries are interested in Iranian oil, and each seems fearful lest the other gain an advantage it lacks. While this country, according to an announcement on December 27, is henceforth to share in the old concession of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company as a result of agreements made with that firm by Standard of New Jersey and Socony Vacuum, the American government is disturbed by the possibility that Russia may obtain a concession in northern Iran. The Iranian government must decide in 1947 whether it can deny oil fields to one country while permitting their exploitation by others. The issue will come up when the concession agreement worked out last April by Premier Ahmad Ghavam and Ivan Sadchikov, Russian Ambassador in Teheran, is submitted for approval to the new Iranian Parliament, now in the process of being elected.

AMERICAN INFLUENCE IN IRAN. Recent indications that Iranian policy coincides in large measure with the wishes of the American government have encouraged Washington to think that the Iranian parliament will somehow exclude Russia from a share in Iranian oil. The United States, for instance, supported Premier Ghavam in the decision he reached in November to send troops to Azerbaijan over the protest of Russian Ambassador Sadchikov. The fall of the pro-Russian Azerbaijan government on December 11 caused United States Ambassador George V. Allen to say a day later: "This is a victory for the central government and the United Nations." (It will be recalled that in 1946 the United Nations Security Council had considered an Iranian complaint against Russian policy in Azerbaijan and the United States had backed Iran.) Mr. Allen's comments emphasize anew the underlying determination of the United States to discourage Russia from spreading its influence in neighboring countries. The United States justifies its opposition to an Iranian oil concession for Russia on the ground that administrators of the concession might disseminate Russian political ideas without regard for the territorial and political integrity of Iran.

Whatever may be American interests in Iran, it

is internal pressure, exerted mainly by the Shah, who has become a rallying point for anti-Russian sentiment in Iran, and by the army, that provides the chief explanation for Ghavam's action with respect to Azerbaijan. A tribal revolt in the southern province of Fars in September expressed the displeasure of conservatives with the conciliatory attitude toward Russia which had marked Ghavam's policy up to that time. Then came swift changes. On October 19 Ghavam dropped from his cabinet the members of the Tudeh (pro-Russian) party. On November 24 he announced that he was ordering troops into Azerbaijan to supervise the parliamentary elections scheduled originally for December 7 and postponed to December 21. During this evolution of policy, the Iranian government occasionally sought and received advice from the United States which, however, has applied no pressure on Ghavam except through formal debate before the United Nations. The influence of this country in Iran is due in large part to its practice of paying cash in gold for goods and services during World War II and to the work of Brig. Gen. Norman H. Schwartzkopf in training the Iranian gendarmerie. Ghavam has not yet been able to win official American support for his request for a \$250,000,000 loan from the International Bank, although an American engineering firm is making an economic survey of Iran as a basis for an internal improvement program on which the Iranian government would spend the \$250,000,000 if obtained.

FUTURE UNITED STATES POLICY. How long the United States will maintain its strong influence in Iran depends on the results of the parliamentary elections, on Ghavam's future course, and on Russia's policy. If Ghavam's Democratic party wins a majority of the 136 seats in parliament, the prime minister will have parliamentary support for whatever foreign policy he may decide to pursue. His course at the moment is unpredictable. Some observers believe that last winter he conciliated Russia with the intention of eventually adopting a firmer attitude. Others hold that his recent firmness toward Russia masks a plan to come ultimately to terms with the Soviet government. The principal evidence that he is not pro-Russian is the fact that he keeps in Washington Ambassador Hussein Ala, who presented the Iranian case against Russia to the UN Security Council.

BLAIR BOLLES